

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EB-07 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00
OMB-01 IO-13 /097 W
-----090420Z 121969 /14

R 081259Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6572
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH DMC MK AKIVA NOFF

1. LABOR ATTACHE AND POLITICAL OFFICER MET JUNE 6 WITH
AKIVA NOFF, NUMBER EIGHT ON THE DMC KNESSET LIST. NOFF,
AN MK FORMERLY REPRESENTING THE FREE CENTER PARTY,
FOLLOWED SHMUEL TAMIR OUT OF THE LIKUD LAST YEAR AND
INTO THE DMC. HE IS ONE OF THE DMC'S FEW SEASONED
POLITICIANS AND, AS A MEMBER OF THE LIKUD FOR THREE
YEARS, KNOWS INTIMATELY THE WORKINGS OF THAT BLOC.

2. NOFF SEES A CHANGE OF MOOD DEVELOPING IN RECENT
DAYS IN HIS PARTY OVER JOINING A LIKUD COALITION. THE
PREVIOUS WILLINGNESS TO GIVE THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE
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LIKUD A CHANCE HAS NOW GIVEN WAY TO A FEELING THAT THE
DIFFERENCES ARE TOO GREAT TO BRIDGE. HE IS DOUBT-
FUL THAT THE DMC WILL JOIN. THE TURNING POINT
WAS BEGIN'S ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO APPOINT DAYAN
FOREIGN MINISTER. THE NEGATIVE REACTION WAS REIN-
FORCED BY THE WAY BEGIN TOOK OVER COALITION NEGOTIA-
TIONS AT THE HEAD OF THE LIKUD TEAM. NOFF SAID

THAT AT THE FIRST MEETING, WHILE BEGIN WAS IN THE HOSPITAL, THE LIKUDNIKS APPEARED OPEN AND FLEXIBLE. BUT WITH BEGIN HEADING THE LIKUD TEAM AT THE SECOND AND THIRD MEETINGS, THE ATMOSPHERE CHANGED FOR THE WORSE. NOFF NOTED ANOTHER FACTOR THAT STRENGTHENED DMC DISINCLINATIONS TO JOIN: HIS PARTY NO LONGER BELIEVES THAT ITS JOINING COULD FORESTALL PARTICIPATION BY AGUDAT YISRAEL IN THE COALITION BY OBTAINING THE NEED FOR THAT PARTY FOR A KNESSET MAJORITY. NOFF THOUGHT IT ALMOST CERTAIN THAT THE AGUDAH PARTY WILL BE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

3. HE PREDICTED A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THE DMC EVEN IN OPPOSITION. IT COULD REPLACE THE ALIGNMENT AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE LIKUD AND MIGHT, IN FACT, COOPT MUCH OF THE LABOR PARTY. THE LATTER IS IN DISARRAY AND DISILLUSIONMENT HAS SET IN AMONG ITS MEMBERS. THE ALIGNMENT'S LOSS HAS HAD A DEEP PSYCHOLOGICAL AFFECT WITHIN ITS RANKS. THE LABOR PARTY HAS NO YOUNG LEADERSHIP TO TAKE OVER FROM THOSE WHO LED THE PARTY TO DEFEAT.

4. NOFF SAID THAT THE DMC DID REMARKABLY WELL IN WINNING 15 SEATS. ITS MAIN PROBLEM WAS THAT IT FAILED TO REACH "THE SECOND ISRAEL." WHILE IN OPPOSITION, EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO CORRECT THIS. MEANWHILE, BEGIN'S ILLNESS CASTS UNCERTAINTY OVER A LIKUD GOVERNMENT AND CONSEQUENTLY THE PERIOD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN OPPOSITION MAY NOT BE LONG.

5. NOFF DID NOT BELIEVE HIS PARTY WOULD SPLIT, EVEN IF IT STAYS OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT (ALTHOUGH HE OBSERVED HALF FACETIOUSLY THAT ON THE OTHER HAND TRYING TO DIVIDE A LIMITED NUMBER OF PORTFOLIOS AMONG THE MANY DMC LEADERS SHOULD IT ENTER THE COALITION WOULD PUT THE PARTY UNDER SEVERE STRAIN). MOST OF ITS LEADERS HAVE ALREADY LEFT EXISTING PARTIES TO JOIN THE DMC. THIS IS THEIR LAST STOP; THEY CERTAINLY WILL NOT GO BACK TO THEIR FORMER PARTIES. HE DENIED THE COMMON JUDGMENT THAT ACTIVE MEN LIKE MEIR AMIT WOULD BE RESTLESS MERELY SERVING AS OPPOSITION MKS. HE SAID THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE PREPARED TO WORK AT THE "POLITICAL GAME" EVEN IN OPPOSITION. THEY WOULD BE BUSY LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR A BROADER CENTER-LEFT MOVEMENT. DISCUSSING THE THINKING OF DMC LEADERS, NOFF SAID THAT AMNON RUBENSTEIN LED THOSE OPPOSING JOINING THE COALITION. ONLY MEIR

ZOREA AMONG THE TOP NAMES FAVORED JOINING--BUT
NOT AT ANY PRICE.

6. NOFF DID NOT THINK THAT THERE WOULD BE
SIGNIFICANT BACKLASH TOWARD THE ALIGNMENT IN THE
HISTADRUT ELECTION. AFTER THE INITIAL SHOCK AND
CONCERN OVER WHAT A LIKUD VICTORY WOULD MEAN,
PEOPLE HAVE BECOME USED TO THE IDEA. THUS, THE
LIKUD MAY BENEFIT FROM THE AURA OF BEING A WINNER
--THE BANDWAGON EFFECT. AT THE SAME TIME HE RULED
OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A LIKUD-DMC COALITION IN
THE HISTADRUT, AND EVEN DOUBTED THAT THE LIKUD
WOULD OUTVOTE THE ALIGNMENT.

7. NOFF THOUGHT THAT DAYAN WOULD RETAIN HIS KNESSET
SEAT--BECAUSE ONLY MKS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE PREMIER-
SHIP. HE BELIEVED THAT DAYAN'S SIGHTS ON THAT
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OFFICE WERE A MAJOR FACTOR IN HIS DECISION TO
ACCEPT BEGIN'S OFFER. IT WAS PROBABLY ALSO ONE
OF BEGIN'S CONSIDERATIONS. BEGIN IS AWARE THAT HE
HAS NO LIKELY SUCCESSOR WITHIN THE LIKUD. NOFF
SAID THAT BAD FEELING HAS EXISTED FOR A LONG TIME
BETWEEN BEGIN AND EZER WEIZMAN. WEIZMAN HAD ONCE
OPPOSED BEGIN AND THE LATTER DOES NOT FORGET
THOSE THINGS.

8. NOFF CAN FORESEE THE LIKUD (ESPECIALLY THE
HERUT PARTY) ORGANIZING THE COUNTRY'S YOUTH USING
NATIONALISM AS A RALLYING FORCE FOR ATTEMPTING TO
PROVIDE THE COUNTRY WITH NEW IDEALISM. IT WOULD BE
AN EFFORT AT DIVERTING ATTENTION FROM THE COUNTRY'S
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND GENERATING THE
ELAN OF EARLIER PIONEERING DAYS, NOFF SAW EFFORTS
TO CURB THIS PROGRAM AS A MAJOR DMC RESPONSIBILITY.
IN THIS CONNECTION, NOFF WARNED AGAINST UNWITTINGLY
HELPING BEGIN. IF TOO MUCH OUTSIDE PRESSURE IS
APPLIED AGAINST A LIKUD GOVERNMENT, THE OUTCRY WILL
UNITE BEHIND BEGIN. THIS WOULD OCCUR EVEN IF MANY
UNDERSTOOD THAT BEGIN'S INTRANSIGENCE HAD PRECIPITATED
THE PRESSURE. DON'T LET HIM ASSUME THE ROLE OF
VICTIM AND LEADER OF A BELEAGUERED PEOPLE, NOFF
URGED.

9. COMMENT: WE ARE LESS CONFIDENT THAN NOFF OF THE
DMC'S ABILITY TO THRIVE IN OPPOSITION--PARTICULARLY
BECAUSE OF THE DEARTH OF POLITICAL EXPERIENCE WITHIN
ITS LEADERSHIP. NOFF IS ONE OF THE FEW WE HAVE
TALKED TO IN RECENT DAYS WHO HAS VENTURED TO MAKE

AN ESTIMATE OF THE CHANCES OF THE DMC COMING INTO A
COALITION. IN CONTRAST TO NOFF'S DOUBTS, THE
TONE OF TODAY'S PRESS (FOLLOWING YESTERDAY'S FOURTH
LIKUD-DMC MEETING) IS SLIGHTLY UP-BEAT ON THE
POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESSFUL COALITION TALKS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY LEADERS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV04078
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770205-0416
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770676/aaaacopx.tel
Line Count: 182
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 45431782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2221681
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH DMC MK AKIVA NOFF
TAGS: PINT, IS, DMC, (NOFF, AKIVA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/45431782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009